

REMARKS**I. General**

Claims 1-10, 20-26, 29, and 30 are pending in the present application. Claims 11-19, 27, 28, and 31-42 have been canceled without prejudice. Claims 1-10, 20-26, 29, and 30 have been amended. In the Office Action of December 22nd, the Examiner required restriction among the following groups of claims:

- Group I: Claims 1-10 and 25-30 drawn to a device for immobilization, classified in class 606, subclass 69;
- Group II: Claims 11-19 drawn to a system for spinal vertebral immobilization, classified in class 606, subclass 60;
- Group III: Claims 20-22 drawn to a hinge, classified in class 606, subclass 54;
- Group IV: Claims 23-24 drawn to a brace, classified in class 623, subclass 17.11; and
- Group V: Claims 31-42, drawn to a method of stabilizing bones, classified in class 606, subclass 61.

II. Claim Restriction

Claims 20-24, as currently amended, ultimately depend from claim 1 and thus belong to group I. Accordingly, Applicant provisionally elects claims 1-10 and 25, 26, 29, and 30 (group I) for continued examination.

III. Claim Amendments

Claims 1 and 25 have been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicant regards as the invention. Support can be found in the specification generally and specifically on paragraphs [0034]-[0065] and corresponding figures, as well as in original claims 1-42. No new matter has been added.

In addition, claims 1-10, 20-26, 29, and 30 have been amended to correct inadvertent errors and to provide proper antecedent basis for recited terms. No new matter is presented.

Moreover, these amendments do not narrow the scope of the claims, but rather present the previously recited terms more clearly.

IV. Conclusion

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 06-2380, under Order No. 65677/P001US/10311263 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

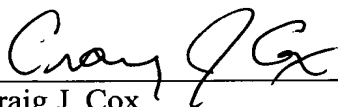
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Date of Deposit: 03-22-2006

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Respectfully submitted,

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